

Responsiveness Summary Related to Public Input Received on the Report Titled

“Relation Between Nitrate in Water Wells and Potential Sources in the Lower Yakima Valley, WA”

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D. Peer Review

Comment #50: Several commenters indicated the peer review conducted for the EPA Report was inadequate because: EPA did not follow its own peer review guidance; that the EPA Report was classified as “influential” by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and required more extensive

review; EPA's selection of peer reviewers was not transparent and all four peer reviewers were from federal agencies; with the exception of one reviewer the comments received were brief and not adequately rigorous; and one peer reviewer stated that the nitrate in many of the wells is most likely from a mix of sources which would be challenging to tease apart, probably requiring a much more extensive sampling campaign and more knowledge of well depth and screen lengths.

EPA's response: The EPA Report did not require formal peer review according to the Agency's peer review guidelines because the EPA Report was classified as "Other" using the OMB work product classification criteria. Although EPA determined that a formal peer review was not required, it decided to conduct an independent third party review. EPA asked scientists from USGS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, EPA's ORD, and EPA Region 10 to review the document. EPA considered the comments on the draft EPA Report and revised the EPA Report in response to the comments. The independent review process helped EPA solidify its conclusions and clarify the limitations and uncertainties of the study.

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